

## [Early Social Customs]

W13955

[Beliefs & Customs - Folkstuff?]

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Form [md]3 Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Early Social Customs

Place of origin Portland, Oreg. Date 12/19/38

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks [?]

Form A

## Library of Congress

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date December 14, 1938

Address 505 Elk Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early Social Customs

Name and address of informant Mr. C. T. Dickinson Boone's Ferry Road, S. W. Portland, Oregon

Date and time of interview Dec. 13, 1938. 2:00-3:00 p. m.

Place of interview Home of worker, Lake Grove, Upper Drive, Oswego, Ore.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Mrs. P. A. Trullinger, Oswego, Oregon.

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Comfortable and fairly attractive both as to house and surroundings.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

## Library of Congress

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

### OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Subject Early Social Customs

Name and address of informant Mr. C. T. Dickinson SW Boone's Ferry Road, Portland, Oregon.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant

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### 10. Other points gained in interview

1. English-Holland Dutch.
2. [Multnonah?] County ([Twp. IS., R. 1R., Sec. 33?]), Oregon. Dec. 5, 1864.
3. Josiah S. Dickinson, New York, 1815; Mother, Martha Ann King, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, 1833.
4. Always lived in Oregon.
5. Three terms, in what were known as subscription schools, at Oswego. A period in Parochial Episcopal School, Oswego, in 1862.
6. Farmer and lumberman; dancing and music.
7. Lumber, and some skill in surveying.
8. Interest in all public affairs. Member many lodges, including A. O. U. N. Odd Fellows, Good Templars, Oswego Grange. I have belonged to the Methodist Church for many years.
9. Remarkably young looking man to be 84 years old, intelligent and well-groomed. Medium sized, erect, with smooth face and ruddy clear skin.
10. A long life of hard work, yet a man who appears to have enjoyed the years, and to have been fairly successful.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

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Works Progress Administration

### OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early Social Customs

Name and address of informant Mr. C. T. Dickinson SW Boone's Ferry Road, Portland, Oregon

Text: I was born on the land where I am living today, only there isn't quite so much of it. There were ten in our family, besides father and mother, nine girls and one boy. All my sisters are dead but two. I am the oldest surviving member of Odd Follows Samaritan Lodge No. 2, and I am the only surviving member of the original Oswego Grange, where I have paid dues for sixty-six years. I led the Grange singing at the State Fair for many years.

This country around here don't look much like it did in my early recollection. It was all solid timber. There was a lot of deer hereabouts and the woods were full of grouse and pheasants. Oswego Lake, which was a marshy slough, called Sucker Lake, in them days, used to be literally covered with wild duck. We could slip out in a skiff with a single-bore rifle and pull down as many as we wanted. And fish, the water was alive with them, mostly suckers. But they were good eating. Up at the head of the lake where a creek came in we used to build a sort of dam with a sloping gate. The fish would climb this gate, something like salmon do, and as they dropped in the two feet of water beyond we boys would wade in and get 'em with nets. That was one of our early sports.

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When I was about sixteen two friends and I went on a hunting trip that covered several months. We went down to Astoria, followed the coast south from there to Coos Bay, east over to Crater Lake and north from Crater Lake to the Columbia River. We had a mule that we used to pack our stuff, but otherwise we travelled on "Shank's Mare", following the paths and trails of the Indians. I think we saw about all the kind of game there is on that trip — bear, elk and deer, cougars and bob cats, coyotes and all sorts of game birds. We only killed what we needed for food. That was one grand trip. We were gone from June until October. As a rule we youngsters worked pretty hard, especially during the summer months. There was always land to clear and weeding to do. In the winter we had some fun though — dancing, spelling and singing school. Maybe you wouldn't think it, but I was the champion speller. We used the old Webster and Sandy spelling books, and once I won a prize of a five dollar gold piece by spelling everybody down on the word "sue". That was in Portland, at Sixth and College street. Our community center was what was known as the Springbrook Schoolhouse. In the spelling bees two of the outstanding spellers or scholars would choose up side and the district teacher maybe would select and give out the words. Just one chance was given and when the speller missed he or she would have to sit down. The last one up was the winner. 'Assafoetida' was a favorite word to down them with. But I won my five dollar on 'sue' because the speller wasn't sure whether it was Sioux, sew, sue, or sou, and no definition was given. I guess I got the one left.

Our early dancing was all square dances. There wasn't an instrument of any sort in the community, so we used to dance to clapping of hands, I learned to be a pretty good clapper and caller. One of the calls went like this, in a sort of singsong: First two ladies cross right hand Turn just half way 'round, Back with the left and don't get lost And balance four in a line. Next two ladies cross right hand Turn just half way round Back with the left and don't get lost And balance four in a line.

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All four ladies cross right hand Turn just half way round Back with the left and don't got lost  
And balance all around.

I was twenty years old before we had any round dancing. The waltz was danced to the count of one - two - three; one - two - three, and such a thing as reversing was unknown. We just went round and round the room on that one-two-three count. There was a [schottische?] that was mighty pretty. As the couple danced each would point his or her right toe and say, "Look at my new shoe. Look at my new shoe." Repeated three times in 4-4 time when the couple faced with toes. The polka was a fast dance, but if any fellow in those days had thrown his partner around like they do now he would have been thrown off the floor.

I guess I was pretty close to twenty, too, before I ever wore anything but buckskin clothes and rawhide shoes that were made at home. I was kind of crude, but I had a half brother that came on from back east. He had gone to school there and was kind of dudish. There was a young lady, a Miss Elisa Cordinell, up from California, where she had gone to Mills College. She and my brother took a shine to one another and were engaged for a while. I guess she waited to perk up her future brother-in-law, for she took me to Portland one day and down to the man's tailor of that time, Roberts his name was, and he fitted me out with stylish clothes, and then she took me over and introduced me to a dancing school. It didn't take me long to be a good dancer. I guess I danced with all the belles of that day. Miss Cordinell afterward married C. A. Dolph.

All that was a long time ago, and what a lot of difference there was between then and now. People think they have hard times now. They don't know anything about hard times. Why we never had anything to eat from in my boyhood but tin dishes, and the forks were all two-tined steel. There was no crockery 4 and we had no white flour. Today it would be called whole wheat I guess, and all our vegetables were the kind that would keep in the collar under [the?] house — potatoes, beets and parsnips and that sort of stuff. No green peas out of season then, not even for rich folks. I guess in all the 20 years my mother

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lived on our donation land claim she didn't go in town once a year — not more than that anyway. It took two hours to go the six miles to Portland. The road was a continuous mudhole in winter, and a foot deep with dust in summer.

I lost my wife six years ago and life has been pretty lonesome ever since. We had a happy life while she lived.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Address 505 Elks Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Subject Early Social Customs

Name and address of informant Mr. C. T. Dickinson SW Boone's Ferry Road, Portland, Oregon

Comment: Mr. Dickinson is the father of the man of that name who operated the Dickinson jam and jelly manufacturing company. He and his wife started the business 32 years ago. Times were hard then, he said, and on the twelve acres left him of the original land of his father there was not enough to support his wife and three boys. They began by taking orders for jams and jellies from people in Portland. They would take the orders early in the fruit season and in autumn deliver to the various families. The first year, he said, they put up about six dozen containers. The second year there were five barrels of 25 doz.



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containers each. The third year he ordered his glasses by the carload. From that time on they had a well-established business that is thriving today.

Though 84 years old, Mr. Dickinson drove his own car to the home of the worker for interviewing. He is a lonesome old man, who likes to talk of early days.